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ABSTRACT

Exploring the problems and needs of a new system of credit, Milton Stern, in "Continuing Education," Journal of Higher Education, vol. 39, no. 8, 1968, pp. 468-470, and Robert J. Pitchell in "The Washington Scene," The National University Extension Association Spectator, Jan. 12, 1969, both report on the 1968 National Planning Conference. In "Recommendation: Establish a Credit Norm for Continuing Education," The Personnel Administrator, vol. 15, no. 5, Sep./Oct. 1970, pp. 23 and 24, Paul J. Grogan presents a concise synopsis of the National Task Force deliberations. Emphasizing the potential of the Continuing Education Unit (CEU), Keith E. Glancy's "A Permanent Record of Continuing Education Using the C. E. Unit," Journal of Continuing Education and Training, vol. 1 (2), Aug. 1971, pp. 109-116, defines the CEU, traces its development, and presents the findings of the 1970-71 pilot project. In a brief report, Robert L. Jacobson's "Southern Accrediting Unit Sets Standards for Off-Campus Programs," Chronicle of Higher Education, Dec. 6, 1971, pp. 1 and 5, discusses the revised standard of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and its application to nontraditional study. (MW)

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Continuing Education

By MILTON R. STERN

Traditionally, the great majority of universities have regarded continuing education as peripheral to their central purposes. Even in public-supported universities this attitude has prevailed.

But a major change of outlook would appear to be emerging, expressing itself as a call for new kinds of formal credit and certification for mature students. This has resulted from the expansion of post-degree professional study and from growth in adjunct para-professional programs. These areas—predominantly in engineering, the new technologies, medicine, law, business management, and social service—have now grown to the point of bringing pressure through many channels for institutionalization and recognition in individual university establishments. Beyond that, the matter is of national importance and requires cooperative solutions. Not only universities and their adult students, but employers—both private and governmental—professional associations, and the data-collection and research arms of government bureaus, have discovered vital interests which overlap.

University activity in advanced levels of continuing education has proliferated greatly outside the degree framework. This has happened with little coordination inside institutions and with little regard to professional associations outside, who themselves have developed varied patterns leading to certification beyond degrees and parallel to them. Standards and educational purpose, save on a course-by-course basis, are unclear; and statistical evidence of work done, as well as student records, is generally in a state of confusion. Thus in several ways universities are directly concerned in the codifications that will be undertaken in the next few years. Their interests are curricular, administrative, registrarial, financial. As an instance of the financial interest: To what extent do state institutions classify post-degree, professional students (or para-professionals) as "full-time equivalents" and hence eligible for the same measure of state support as undergraduate and graduate credit students? To what extent do we even know how many post- or para-professionals are enrolled in all too casual ways through our schools and adjunct agencies?

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The difficulty of obtaining answers to these and other questions points up an issue which is urgent throughout the country. The issue is well expressed in the call to a meeting on the subject held in Washington on July 1–2, 1968, under the title, "Planning Conference on the Feasibility of a Uniform Crediting and Certification System for Continuing Education."

Sponsorship was significantly broad. The meeting was called by the U.S. Office of Education, U.S. Civil Service Commission, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the National University Extension Association. Sessions were attended by forty-three representatives of universities, professional associations, trade associations, labor organizations, private enterprises in education, and federal departments.

The concept paper for the Washington meeting put the problems squarely:

> Forms of instruction [in continuing education] have had no uniform duration, timing, or unit of measurement, nor have they always been sharply targeted to the population.
>
> Too little recognition is given participants—whether students or instructors—in continuing education experiences. Meaningful check points and career goals comparable to the established degrees and professional licenses are lacking in the smorgasbord of extension and continuing education offerings presently available to the individual.
>
> Similarly, from the points of view of the institution, the employer and the public, there is no adequate means of measuring the amount of noncredit activity, except in terms of the number of persons participating in such activities; or the academic level of such activities, except to the extent that elementary, secondary or higher educational institutions may have administered the programs. These gross data, which are so essential for planning purposes, are almost entirely lacking in the field of continuing education.
>
> Large employers, such as the federal government and major industrial concerns, which have many thousands of professional-level employees, have special needs for measuring post-graduate educational activities, not only for hiring purposes but also for promotional criteria.

The meeting sought to explore the possibility of "accrediting noncredit courses" across the spectrum of adult education. Discussion showed this to be difficult, if not impossible, of early codification. Many types of institutions are engaged in addition to universities. It became clear, however, that the key areas were post-degree professional and para-professional study. Universities and professional associations as well as community colleges and others are involved therein, without adequate interchange of information. As a result of the discussion, plans have been laid to canvass the realizability of a modular system, parallel to the interchangeable Carnegie units at the undergraduate and graduate level.

In the past, a typical consequence of the development of a valid

subject matter in extension—on the growing edge of the university—was its incorporation after a time of trial into the graduate or undergraduate structure. This may well continue in certain areas—in computer study perhaps—where the work has appeal to young adults without degree status. But when significant numbers of older students will already have attained not only first degrees but advanced ones and professional status, that "natural" process will not suffice. Nor can the existing degree apparatus be readily adapted for the subprofessionals.

While universities are by no means uniquely involved, there is little doubt that they must play a central role. A few institutions have begun to acknowledge the situation. Northeastern University has established "professional credit" in engineering education, while the University of California at Los Angeles for some years has labeled offerings, again in engineering extension, as interpretable in "professional units." What credit this represents remains unclear. Standardization on a national scale appears urgently needed.

Such a new system of credit, even in a limited area of adult education, requires both cautious application and imagination. The new system must accept the idea that, while some parts of the field are ready for institutionalization, others are not. The vitality of continuing education would be diminished if rigid formulas were to include some programs of study inappropriately—or exclude them disparagingly.

The concept of non-credit instruction is important to the process of constant renewal in university life. A paradox is evident in the present circumstance: post-degree professional education could not develop to the point of pressure for further accreditation within the existing credit structure. And if the universities had not been able to offer established professionals opportunities to study on a non-credit basis, the professional societies would have had to respond more urgently than they have. Or the response would not have come at all, a major dimension of social need would not have been met, and the whole public would have lost quite as much as the mature professionals themselves. Similarly, only after experimentation in the non-credit arena, can programs for para-professionals be considered for credit reward of whatever nature. A new viewpoint about the relation between credit, non-credit, and "new" credit is now becoming evident.

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1/10/69

THE WASHINGTON SCENE

Robert J. Pitchell

A national task force, meeting recently in Washington, took a major step toward providing a uniform unit for measuring noncredit continuing education programs. The task force approved in principle a proposal calling for an expert study group to develop a set of criteria and standards for such a uniform unit and to recommend procedures for applying it to a wide variety of educational programs. Let us explore the reasons for the wide interest in a uniform unit and the steps which led to our current activities.

During a span of 45 years in the life of an individual, he can and probably will be involved in a wide variety of continuing education activities. With at least 25 million people participating in continuing education each year, it is imperative that these activities exhibit better organization, structure, and continuity than they have in the past. Therefore, it is vital that a system of records be developed to provide the statistical information needed by educational institutions, students, and employers. Thus far, no such system has been generally accepted.

Too little recognition has been given participants in continuing education experiences. Visible checkpoints and career goals comparable to established degrees and professional licenses are lacking in the smorgasbord of extension and continuing education offerings currently available. For the institution, the employer, and the public, there is no adequate means of measuring the amount of noncredit educational activity except in terms of the number of persons participating in a given program.

The gross data on continuing education, essential for planning and policy-making, are almost entirely lacking. To add to the problem, uniform reporting is virtually impossible because uniform definitions have not been established. The meager data now collected is inaccurate because of the wide variation in methods of counting and reporting noncredit continuing education activities.

It has become abundantly clear that a uniform unit of measurement for noncredit continuing education programs is needed which can be applied to a wide variety of educational activities.

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2-2-2-2 The Washington Scene

Many examples are available of institutions, organizations, and societies which have developed some method of providing recognition for participation in noncredit continuing education. Among these are the American Medical Association, the various professional engineers' societies, the American Institute of Chemists, the American Society for Personnel Administration, the Association of University Evening Colleges, and the National University Extension Association.

Early last year, the U.S. Office of Education, the Civil Service Commission, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and NUEA agreed to sponsor ~~jointly~~ a national planning conference to study the feasibility of a uniform unit of measurement for noncredit continuing education programs. This conference was held in July 1968 in Washington, D.C., with representatives of 33 organizations which had expressed a need for a uniform unit of measurement.

After studying background papers and reports from participants, the conference agreed substantially on the following points:

1. There is a significant national need for a uniform unit of measurement for noncredit continuing education activities.

2. The solution to developing a usable system requires the unified and coordinated efforts of the consumer of the educational product as well as the producer of the product.

The participants wanted further study and consideration of the problem, so a task force representing the associations and organizations at the conference was appointed. The task force was to develop a proposal for a joint effort to study the feasibility and implementation of a uniform unit for the measurement of noncredit continuing education programs which could be used by most of the groups represented at the conference.

The diversity of interests represented by the task force is indicated by the organizations represented. The members of the task force are Warren Ball, American Medical Association; Leonard R. Brice, American Society for Personnel Administration; Edward H. Cox, DuPont Company; Paul J. Grogan, University of Wisconsin; William L. Hardy,

United Auto Workers; Reginald Jones, U.S. Civil Service Commission; and Morris Ullman, U.S. Office of Education. William L. Turner, North Carolina State University is the chairman; and Keith Glancy and I are providing staff assistance on the part of NUEA.

The discussions during the first two meetings of the task force later in the year centered on these general areas:

1. The need for a uniform unit of measurement as a basis for equating statistical reporting of quantity of continuing education, for setting minimum requirements for training and updating in occupational and professional areas, and for providing a visible accumulation of educational experiences for participating individuals.

2. The desirability of making the continuing education unit a simple, unbreakable unit which people will accept and value; it should be applicable to all types of noncredit noncredit continuing education. It should reflect equal effort and provide rational results when applied to a variety of educational situations.

3. The need to define the continuing education unit and provide examples of its applications sufficient for forming a basis for its use in a wide variety of situations. A comprehensive statement of criteria and standards must be developed and the operational use uf the units described.

A proposal for funding the work of a study group was discussed, modified, and subsequently approved. Formal action was taken to initiate the immediate investigation of funding possibilities for the revised proposal.

The proposed study group would consist of ten to twelve carefully-selected persons representing a broad spectrum of the institutions and organizations interested in continuing education. The group's objectives would be:

1. The investigation of the points of view and the problems associated with the activation of a uniform unit of measurement for noncredit continuing education programs.

2.The development of a comprehensive statement of criteria and standards relating to

the application and use of such a unit.

3. The development and appraisal of pilot programs for testing the tentative criteria and standards recommended by the group.

4. Consideration of and recommendations concerning the operating procedures needed to implement such a program on a national basis.

5. The completion of reports and statements relating to the findings of the study group.

The development and general acceptance of a uniform unit of measurement for noncredit continuing education programs is expected to have a profound effect on the growth of educational programs for adults since it will make possible for the first time the comprehensive recording and transcription of an individual's accomplishments in education beyond the formal credit and degree programs in accredited educational institutions.

#

Paul J. Grogan is professor of engineering, University Extension, The University of Wisconsin. He was one of the initiators of the effort that led to the National Planning Conference on the Continuing Education Unit and has served these past two years as vice chairman of the National Task Force whose work is detailed here. Mr. Grogan first became interested in ASPA's drive toward some national system for recognizing the informal education background of personnel administrators when he served from 1966-1968 as Director, Office of State Technical Services, U.S. Department of Commerce. It was during that period that he published in THE PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR, March-April, 1967, pps. 1-7, under the title, "Professionalism—Continuing Education Is the Answer." Mr. Grogan has published over 100 times in like vein in more than 40 journals and education formats both here and abroad.

Recommendation: Establish a credit norm for continuing education

Aid to the selection process

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Background

A National Planning Conference was convened in Washington, D.C., July 1 and 2, 1968, for purposes of determining the feasibility of establishing a uniform unit for measuring individual participation in noncredit continuing education. The American Society for Personnel Administration was represented at the conference in the person of Mr. Leonard R. Brice, Executive Vice President.

Mr. Brice since has served on the national task force authorized by the larger planning group to engage in further study and design of the uniform measurement for noncredit continuing education. The following information synopsizes the deliberations of that task force resulting from a series of eight meetings over a period of two years.

Problem Statement

Available knowledge is thought by many to double in no more than 11 years. This phenomenon requires our continuing education programs to determine and maintain skills and awareness to an ever changing frame of reference.

We see increasing signs today of institutions, organizations and individuals seeking to "formalize" informal education as a device for making the pursuit of new knowledge ever more attractive to specific audiences or professional groups. Approximately 35 institutional and organizational programs have been identified from Boston to Oregon and from California to Florida, as well as from Kansas, Utah and Wisconsin, in which one aspect or another of recognition is given to individual effort in continuing education.

Specifics

The several objectives of this proposal are contained in no more than seven consecutive steps. These seven steps represent the simple and orderly adaptations that institutions and society at large need to make to one degree or another to facilitate the establishment of a uniform national system for the measurement and recognition of individual participation in noncredit continuing education.

Step 1. (Continuing Education Defined) To identify and refer consistently to all significant learning experiences of post-secondary level, and for which degree credit is not earned, as **continuing education**. This definition is intended to encompass the great wealth and diversity of educational opportunities referred to variously at present as noncredit course, extension activity, evening division offering, off-campus instruction, certificate program, etc. Continuing education then becomes a part of the totality of education, along with **elementary, secondary, technicial-vocational, undergraduate, graduate and continuing education.** Each of these principal categories of education lends itself to further classification as in the examples of sub-professional, the use of the innocuous terminology of "non-professional and general adult education representing subsets of continuing education.

Step 2. (Continuing Education Unit Recognized) To refer to learning activities under the definition of continuing education in terms of **continuing education units** (known variously as "c.e. units," "c.e.u" or, simply, "q"), thereby minimizing credit" while also avoiding giving offense to the guardians of "credit" inasmuch as that nomenclature is intended to apply almost exclusively to formal learning activities that traditionally culminate in a diploma or a degree and for which the continuing education unit is not intended to apply.

Step 3. (Continuing Education Unit Defined) To define the continuing education unit as 10 individual or contact hours of participation in an organized educational activity in which the sponsor, course content, format, and person in responsible charge of the learning experience are clearly identified as the minimum criteria essential to establishing the validity of the continuing education unit. (This unit of measure compares favorably in terms of its contact hour requirements with the quarter credit that is already established as a significant and acceptable threshold level of learning effort by an individual.) The continuing education unit has the further advantage of being computed directly and simply for all formats and durations in the programming of continuing education wherever student contact hours can be determined. Any other common measure of student effort, whether formal or informal in nature, also may be readily converted into equivalent c.e.u. (or, simply, q) because of the decimal nature of the latter unit.

Step 4. (Wide Adoption Encouraged) To encourage professional societies, certificating agencies, placement activities, employers, personnel managers, counsellors, licensing boards, etc., to establish standards and incentives for personal and professional development in terms of c.e.u. to be acquired over a given period of time. These standards, in effect, serve the purposes of accreditation. The suggestion

that recognition be external to educational institutions should help ward off the specter of "diploma mills" coming into existence as a result of these developments, whether in the form of university extension-type operations or simply being labelled as such because of their offering either degrees or credits that are neither in the eyes of academe. The proposed system also permits, indeed encourages, the typical individual to marshal and utilize a host of continuing education resources to serve his particular needs in the form of in-plant courses, association programs, use of proprietary schools and organization, and the blending of a great number and variety of educational institutional programs in meeting a particular career objective.

Step 5. (Standardized Descriptions Encouraged) To describe all continuing education activities in terms of audience, purpose, format, content, prerequisites, qualifying requirements, duration, etc., so that intelligent judgments can be made by others at removed locations and at later times as to what the educational experience amounted to in terms of new learning acquired by the individual participant. These abstracts should be maintained indefinitely in the permanent records of the sponsor of every bona fide continuing education learning experience for purposes of satisfying inquiries about individuals who have taken part in such learning exercises.

Step 6. (Transfer of Records Facilitated) To establish a machine readable and transferable individual record for all continuing education students served by the particular sponsor. These records are to be maintained throughout time in terms of the Social Security numbers and the learning experience (See Item 5) in which each individual learner participates. This machine record should be readily transferable to any inquirer (See Item 4) who wishes to recognize or otherwise reward the individual for persistence and excellence in the pursuit of continuing education.

Step 7. (Performance Evaluation Maintained Optional) To exercise the option among sponsors of continuing education programs of maintaining performance records by persons in continuing education according to any of three readily convenient and traditional grading system (a) **auditor or observer** (designated as X), for virtually passive participation, as in a lecture or demonstration; b) **satisfactory or unsatisfactory** (S or U), applicable to the majority of continuing education programs where good attendance at sessions, participation in discussion, and the filing of a simple course appraisal form are sufficient to qualify the student for the satisfactory mark; and c) **conventional letter or numerical grades** (as in A through F) where typical academic credit instruction standards are maintained in terms of attendance, recitation, outside reading and problem assignments, and the periodic and final evaluation of individual performance by examination.

Summary

Thus, the proposed system neither adds to nor detracts from the present system of continuing education in its simplicity and its appeal. It is expected, however, that the more meaningful forms of professional recognition built upon participation in continuing education each will carry its own stipulation as to how individual performance is to be evaluated. For example, proficiency or equivalency examinations may come into being, sector by sector, to remove all doubt whatsoever about the status the individual has obtained through continuing education and demonstrated by examination.

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A Permanent Record of Continuing Education Using the C.E. Unit

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ABSTRACT

A new unit of measurement, the continuing education unit, has been developed by a national task force to quantify and record noncredit continuing education activities. It is designed to provide a permanent record and method of reporting individual participation in significant continuing education activities, whether for professional, vocational or personal development.

When the quality control engineer comes home from a two-week course in "Statistical Quality Control," offered by a midwest university, he often has a small certificate to drop in his files and a report to turn in to his department head. The report should finally come to rest in his file in the personnel office. Over a period of three or four years he may attend two other intensive training courses which improve his capabilities as a quality control engineer.

When he is being considered for a promotion, or even for a routine increase in salary, such reports of training may, or may not, be noticed as his record is reviewed. Three specialized intensive courses should have a significant impact on his job performance and effectiveness, but present records are usually meager and difficult to interpret.

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If he moves to another company, he must unearth his certificates for the various courses, but he may still fail to make any impression with the extra educational effort he has made to improve his competency. It is difficult, if not impossible, for him to obtain an official record of his work other than the original certificate or wallet card. It is likewise difficult for the personnel officer or the chief engineer to interpret the records which might be obtained from most training institutions today.

The above situation is just one aspect of a major problem which has been the focus of a task force for the past three years—the problem of finding a standard unit for recording and reporting continuing education activities. An exploratory session was called in 1968 by a committee representing the National University Extension Association, the U.S. Office of Education, the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and the Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. The meeting was attended by about forty representatives from such diverse groups as the American Medical Association, the United Auto Workers, engineering associations, and educational institutions.

Action by this group resulted in the appointment of a National Task Force[1] which was assigned the task of developing a unit of measurement and designing procedures for putting it into practice. During the past three years this national task force has met periodically to develop and define the unit and the recommendations and procedures for its use. A progress report[2] was released in 1970 providing a tentative definition for the recommended unit, called the continuing education unit. The c.e. unit was defined as: *Ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction and qualified instruction.*

This unit has the advantage of being easily computed and recorded for all formats and durations of adult and continuing education for which contact hours of instruction can be calculated. Instructional contact hours can be determined for practically all structured noncredit educational programs. An evening class, for instance, fits easily into the pattern. Two hours each week for twelve weeks equals 24 contact hours, or 2.4 c.e. units. A three-day intensive course may involve 20 contact hours, or 2.0 c.e. units. Such flexible units lend themselves to easy recording and may be added together as equal units to provide a cumulative total of activities for the individual student or for the institution

providing the education. Since the unit measures informal instruction, any division involving less then one contact hour, or one tenth of a c.e. unit, cannot be justified.

The determination of the number of c.e. units to be awarded, using the guidelines and definition developed by the task force, is the responsibility of the program director since he is most familiar with the structure of the educational activity. It is his responsibility to confirm, directly or through the instructor, that the individual participant has completed the program and is to be awarded the specified number of units.

The institution or organization is responsible for maintaining the permanent records of individual participation and also for making such records available at the request of the student in the same way that credit transcripts are made available. While these requirements are not great, their fulfillment may require some adjustment in the present system, not always an easy task.

The necessity for initiating and maintaining permanent records for each individual participant will tend to eliminate the recording of short, insignificant educational activities. The pilot project coordinators recommended to the task force that it should discourage awarding units to short term (less than one c.e. unit) programs, particularly those of a conference type (i.e., those with a series of speakers not coordinated by a single moderator or director).

With this relatively simple tool, individual records of participation in significant educational activities become practical. Reports on units earned are then as easily transferred from one institution or organization to another as are transcripts of high school and college credits. And, despite some problems of equating quantity and quality, these records become nearly as meaningful as traditional transcripts.

The advantages soon become obvious. The personnel office will receive reports with a standard format that are much easier to interpret. The supervisor can review and evaluate the individual's record much more accurately. More important, however, from the point of view of the national task force, is the ease with which the individual student can now obtain records of his own educational accomplishments. He has only to make a request for a transcript from the source of his training.

Since this new concept is not yet in wide use, it does not yet fulfill the function of making such records readily available. It

may realize its potential in the near future as more institutions and organizations move to adopt the c.e. unit.

Recording c.e. units on individual records for such significant training programs as the course in industrial instrumentation reported in the May issue of this journal by Mr. Moore,[3] or the education for industrial technicians in Pennsylvania reported by Professor Dunn[4] would provide two excellent examples of possible applications of the unit.

To test the procedures which the task force recommended, representative member institutions of the National University Extension Association were invited to assist in a pilot project during the 1970-71 academic year. The response was enthusiastic and twenty institutions were represented at an orientation session held in Washington, D.C., in July, 1970. Because of the short lead time and the administrative problems involved, a few were not able to initiate the awarding of units during the year, but reports were received from fourteen institutions.

The pilot project coordinators (one at each institution) reported on more than 600 different noncredit educational activities offered by these universities. Over 28,000 adult students were involved and most of them were awarded c.e. units for their participation. The pilot project included an adequate sample of the various types of continuing education activities usually offered by colleges and universities, from conferences through evening classes and correspondence courses.

The coordinators answered an evaluation questionnaire and many of them met to review their project experience at the NUEA Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon, in May, 1971. The coordinators indicated general approval of the c.e. unit and its application. They suggested no major changes in the definition or the recommendations for initiating the awarding of the unit made by the national task force. Several observed that the c.e. unit would not be fully effective until it was in much more general use.[5]

The major problem noted in the pilot projects was that of determining individual attendance and thus determining which individuals should be awarded c.e. units. By their very nature, informal courses do not require regular attendance on the part of the student. No easy solutions to this problem were forthcoming, but it was generally agreed that there were inherent dangers, especially of diluting the value of the c.e. unit, if units were awarded without adequate information about the participation by

the individual adult student. The task force will be giving additional consideration to this problem in future meetings.

The extension staff at the University of Missouri-Rolla has developed a complete computer program for the c.e. unit which prints the record for an individual student. This record or transcript includes not only the student's name, social security number, course, date, and the number of c.e. units awarded, but also a two or three line description of each course reported. During the coming year the system is expected to become operative at other campuses of the University of Missouri.

What was behind this development of a uniform unit to measure continuing education? Why was it needed? Some of the reasons have already been noted, but the evidence that the c.e. unit is needed and can be useful continues to come in from many different organizations.

The U.S. Office of Education now uses the only unit available to it, a head count of registrations, to collect data on adult and continuing education. This results in equating such extremes as attendance at one session of a lecture series with attendance at an eight-week intensive course. This equates one hour of participation with 240 hours. Staff members at USOE were appalled by the inconsistency and inaccuracy of the available statistics on continuing education. The use of a uniform unit should reduce the error involved by a factor of up to 100, leaving an error of "only" 2.4 to 1.

In universities and colleges the c.e. unit can be especially valuable in providing comparable data from year to year to assist with fiscal planning. The availability of uniform and comparable data makes possible much more cogent arguments for program and operating funds for extension and continuing education.

Not only engineers but many other professionals are vitally interested in continuing education. Professional societies are not only encouraging, but in some cases mandating, a minimum amount of professional continuing education. These societies are now facing the problem of recording this great variety of activity. The c.e. unit makes this problem much easier to solve.

The American Medical Association has approved a Certificate of Continuing Education for its members. It must be renewed by participation in professional educational activities during each three-year period. The Oregon State Medical Association now has a requirement of continuing education for maintaining member-

ship in its Academy of General Practice. The nursing, dental and veterinarian professional groups are considering or have adopted similar requirements. Many of these associations are evaluating the c.e. unit as a tool to assist in recording and reporting the varied continuing education activities involved in fulfilling these requirements.

Other organizations heavily involved in noncredit training activities have also indicated an interest in using the c.e. unit. The U.S. Civil Service Commission enrolls up to 100,000 government employees each year in its series of training courses. The Armed Services have major programs which are currently well documented, but the variety still poses the problem of providing a simple quantitative record. These and other major training organizations are evaluating the c.e. unit and its potential.

Labor unions have had little success in including continuing education in the education package in union contracts. A uniform unit would provide a common denominator from which to negotiate for noncredit educational benefits for union members. Such education is often more valuable than college courses to individual union members.

As some of these examples suggest, the application of the c.e. unit is not limited to educational institutions, but may be applied by any organization which offers a substantial educational program and is willing to maintain permanent records and provide a record for the individual participant upon request.

While a proliferation of organizations and institutions offering units would appear to dilute the value of the unit, it is doubtful that it will be any more of a nuisance than diploma mills are to colleges and universities. The reputation of the institution, organization or agency will substantiate the quality of the units awarded. Each organization will, of necessity, maintain a reasonably consistent basis for awarding units or it will soon find that its reports are regarded very lightly by other organizations. Units will be acceptable only on the basis of the known quality of the educational program which is offered.

The concept of continuing education units is also expected to foster the development of more sequential programs, educational activities which take the student through a series of steps, possibly over a period of several years. The ability to quantify continuing education makes it much more feasible to plan long-range training and personnel development programs which build one program on

the other, with a minimum number of units indicating readiness to move to the next block of educational experience. The need and possibilities for such significant units of training are several times greater than the number of such programs now in operation.

As noted by the pilot project coordinators, the c.e. unit will make an impact only as it is used by a growing number of organizations and institutions. As one coordinator stated, "We have a product for which we have not created a demand." As more people in industry and in professional associations know about and appreciate the potential of the unit, there will be more demand upon educational institutions to award, record, and report continuing education activities by using this standard unit. When such requests are made of them, the institutions will be much more interested in developing a permanent record system for continuing education.

With the emphasis now being given to continuing education, especially professional and vocational, and with this education spanning the forty working years of a person's productive life, the need for a uniform unit and permanent records becomes obvious. Providing a permanent record of an individual's informal educational activities is worth the effort expended to develop the c.e. unit. Of greater importance, however, is the potential it has for encouraging long-range planning and sequential continuing education to provide significant educational opportunities in the noncredit area. Such long-range goals fan the enthusiasm for the c.e. unit held by the National Task Force and by the pilot project coordinators.

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SOUTHERN ACCREDITING UNIT SETS STANDARDS FOR OFF-CAMPUS DEGREE PROGRAMS

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Southern Accrediting Unit Sets Standards For Off-Campus Degree Programs

By ROBERT L. JACOBSON

MIAMI BEACH

Off-campus degree programs and other non-traditional learning activities in higher education took a long step toward "legitimacy" last week as they were incorporated for the first time in the standards of a regional accrediting agency.

The action, by the college delegate assembly of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, amounts to formal recognition by the South's higher education establishment that non-traditional study has come into its own as a worthwhile alternative to regular academic programs.

By extensively revising a 10-year-old standard on what it terms "special activities"—now defined to include non-traditional studies—the assembly is seeking both to encourage the development of such programs and to exert "some kind of quality control" over them, according to J. K. Williams, president of Texas A&M University and chairman of the association's commission on colleges.

It is anticipated that similar action will be taken eventually by collegiate accrediting bodies in other regions. A federation of those agencies is working toward common procedures.

The new standard of the Southern Association, adopted at its annual meeting here last week after a two-year study, becomes part of the criteria used by its college commission to accredit institutions and periodically to review the status of those previously accredited.

The study showed widespread interest in special activities among colleges and universities in this 11-state region. However, leaders of the association believe that some institutions used the previous standard, which was more restrictive, as an "excuse" not to start non-traditional programs.

'To Encourage Innovation'

As revised, the standard gives institutions fairly wide latitude to develop special activities. It defines these activities as "operationally separate units, external or special degree programs, off-campus classes and units, independent study programs including correspondence and home study, conferences and institutes including short courses and workshops, foreign travel and study, media instruction including radio and television, and on-campus programs including special evening classes."

The standard says that the college commission should "seek to encourage innovation and an imaginative approach to providing quality instruction according to the educational needs of the college's constituents."

At the same time, the standard stresses that provisions for special activities should include "an adequate administrative organization, a sound financial base, a competent faculty, and sufficient and adequate facilities." It specifies that special activities be given a "separate identity" under their own administrative unit.

The standard goes on to say that all such activities "must be compatible with the total educational program of the institution," and that they always will be evaluated by the college commission in the granting or reaffirmation of accreditation.

Specific interpretations within the standard elaborate this policy, but a comparison of the new provisions with the old ones makes clear that the association is interested mainly in liberalizing its position.

Insistence on 'Comparability' Dropped

Gone, for example, is an insistence that the standards of various special activities be "comparable" with those of regular programs.

Also missing are previous limitations on the portion of credits toward a degree that could be earned through special activities.

Another change is reflected in the new standard's assertion that, while special activities must have financial support, they "should not be determined solely on the principle of being 'self-supporting,' but rather on the principle of fulfilling the educational responsibility of the institution to its constituents."

'Effort to Catch Up'

Gordon W. Sweet, executive secretary of the college commission, describes the new standard as "an effort on our part to catch up with, if not get ahead of, the developments" in the institutions and "an effort to see that there are no roadblocks."

Grover J. Andrews, an association staff member who conducted the study on special activities, says the revised standard will "open the way for our institutions to provide just about any kind" of program in non-traditional and continuing education.

Mr. Andrews maintains that the reluctance of some institutions to embark on non-traditional programs has been rooted in apathy among their faculties.

The revised standard tends to place greater reliance on administrators—acting "in cooperation with appropriate deans and departments"—for developing the programs.

As a consequence of the new standard, the college commission has changed its policy on "multi-campus institutions" so that all operationally separate units must be accredited separately. Under the previous policy, some branch campuses have shared the accreditation of their parent institutions. These branches will continue in that status until they can be examined under the new policy.

A Uniform Measure

A major feature of the revised standard is a specific, uniform means of measuring individuals' participation in non-credit activities.

The measurement relies on a "continuing education unit," which is defined as "10 contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education (adult or extension) experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction."

The idea of the unit, or CEU, was developed by a national task force of educators under the chairmanship of William L. Turner, former dean of university extension at North Carolina State University at Raleigh.

Inclusion of the unit in the Southern Association's standard marks the first time a regional accrediting agency has endorsed this approach. Its use is likely to grow appreciably as colleges and universities become more committed to community service—a course urged upon members of the college delegate assembly by speakers at last week's meeting.

Edgar J. Boone, president-elect of the Adult Education Association, called for a "total commitment" to public service so that it could receive the same emphasis by academic institutions as resident teaching and research.

Glenn Goerke, provost and associate dean of faculties at Florida International University, said he expected many universities to make continuing education and other special activities a "major mission," rather than appendages to traditional programs.

The entire Southern Association, meanwhile, has created a separate commission to accredit nonprofit post-secondary institutions offering vocational and technical education but not granting degrees.

Twenty-four such institutions were accredited here and six others that had been given tentative accreditation a year ago had their accreditation reaffirmed.